

ago, the Senate was also discussing a major spending package. In fact, it was the same size as what is being proposed right now—about \$2 trillion—an appropriate pricetag back at the start of the crisis, but that is where the similarity actually ends.

Last March, the Senate was working overtime, in a bipartisan fashion, to craft good policy from the bottom up. I assembled bipartisan task forces. We had Republicans and Democrats and staff working around the clock to build the policies that would save our health system and our economy.

The CARES Act sustained us for almost a year of shutdowns. It funded the healthcare fight, saved small businesses, and funded Operation Warp Speed, which helped pave the way for these pioneering vaccines and preordered hundreds of millions of doses for Americans. The law sent so much relief to households that, even as the GDP declined, personal incomes and savings actually went up. Even liberal economists say President Biden has inherited an economy that was already primed for a swift recovery. It was the largest American rescue package ever. Yet it passed the Senate without one single dissenting vote because it was built the right way.

That was last March. So what about today?

Instead of heading into a dark tunnel, we are accelerating out of it: incredible vaccines, a rebounding economy. That is what the Biden administration inherited thanks to what we did last year.

Yet Washington Democrats are trying to exploit the last chapters of this crisis to pass what President Biden's Chief of Staff calls "the most progressive domestic legislation in a generation," and they have told Republicans: Take it or leave it. No openness to meaningful bipartisan input. Ten Republican Senators approached President Biden and proposed cooperation on the order of hundreds of billions of dollars. They were refused. All that interested the Democrats was a partisan hodgepodge of, largely, non-COVID-related items.

Last year, the Democratic leader said:

Sitting in your own office, writing a bill, and then demanding the other side support it is not anyone's idea of bipartisanship.

As recently as last November, he said:

We need a true bipartisan bill—not "this is our bill, take it or leave it."

Another time, our friend from New York told everyone to "go look up in the dictionary what 'bipartisanship' is. It's both parties working together, not your party doing a bill and then saying it's bipartisan."

In less than 4 months, we have had two completely different versions of the Democratic leader. The two of them could have a fascinating debate with each other.

But look, the real tragedy here is not Senate process; it is how ill-suited this

bill is to what Americans need right now. There are no policies to get schools reopened right away and no smart solutions to directly spur rehiring. Less than 1 percent of the money goes to the vaccines that will end this nightmare—only 9 percent to the entire healthcare fight altogether.

I guess it has become a rite of passage for a new Democratic President to begin with a poorly targeted spending spree that doesn't give Americans what they need.

We already laid the foundation for a roaring comeback. The Biden administration inherited a tide that was already turning, but they have chosen to ignore the approach that got us this far.

FOR THE PEOPLE ACT OF 2021

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, now, on one final matter, yesterday evening, House Democrats repassed their plan to give Washington unprecedented power over the way our Nation conducts elections. Just like their partisan spending spree from last week, the only thing bipartisan about the vote was the opposition.

The same party that wants to change Senate rules when they lose a vote, pack the Supreme Court when they lose a case, and throw out the electoral college every time they lose the White House now wants to forcibly rewrite 50 States' election laws from Washington. It is unprincipled. It is unwarranted. Large portions of it may well be unconstitutional. One of the key principles of American elections is that Federal officeholders cannot personally micro-manage the way in which voters can hire and fire us.

Different States and localities settle questions around early voting or absentee voting or voter registration in very different ways. Washington Democrats want every county in America to have to answer all of those questions the way they want. For example, no State would be able to have a simple voter ID requirement unless they neutered it with a massive loophole, but every State would be forced to allow ballot harvesting, where paid political operatives can show up, carrying a stack of ballots with other people's names on them.

Imagine looking at this national landscape, where we have seen the losing side doubt the legitimacy of two consecutive Presidential elections, and thinking: This is the time for a sweeping, one-party rewrite of election law.

Democrats are also coming after Americans' free speech. The Federal Election Commission was set up after Watergate to be a bipartisan panel by design. The FEC intentionally needs bipartisan consensus to throw a penalty flag. Washington Democrats want to scrap that as well.

Their bill would convert the FEC into an odd-numbered, partisan body, and this partisan FEC would get even greater scope to nose around in even

more of Americans' speech and Americans' activities. The bill also tramples on citizens' privacy with new mandates that would intensify "cancel culture" and help mobs harass people for their private views. Even the leftwing ACLU condemns this part of H.R. 1.

This is what the ACLU had to say:

It could directly interfere with the ability of many to engage in political speech about causes that they care about and that impact their lives.

That was from the ACLU.

That is right. House Democrats have swung so far to the anti-free speech left that they have even lost the ACLU.

Speaking of political swings, Democrats who want Washington to take over elections should remember that majorities in Congress actually come and go. It would be absurd for election regulations in every precinct in America to go boomeranging back and forth every time Congress changes hands. Millions of American voters elected 50 Republican Senators and a whole lot of House Republicans to make sure that Democrats play by the rules, not rewrite the rules. For one party to seize unilateral control over elections nationwide would be a civic catastrophe.

It is worth asking: Why are Washington Democrats so desperate to forcibly rewrite election law before the next time voters decide their fates?

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

The majority whip.

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT OF 2021

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, some of our Republican colleagues say that America doesn't need President Biden's COVID rescue plan because "the pandemic is nearly over." Funny. I have never heard them say we shouldn't spend money to help tornado victims in their States after the tornadoes were gone.

Let me say it clearly. We are not out of the woods yet. I wish we were. There are 510,000 Americans—maybe more now—who have died. The United States has 5 percent of the world's population. We have 20 percent of the COVID infections and deaths. Why? Because of poor leadership during the first year of this pandemic.

We had a President then, who is now gone, who would announce it was a hoax, and it was going to disappear by Easter, downplaying the seriousness of the situation with his fanciful flights about certain chemicals that were going to save us or whether or not we should all be gargling Lysol every morning. It made no sense, and the American people came out of that experience confused and infected, with deaths in their families. That was the reality of the first year of the pandemic.